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comment

What does "queer" mean these days?

Our society teaches us that opposite-sex desire is the "normal" way of life. That's the truth we're taught and, almost immediately, any distinction from the traditional pattern must necessarily be weird.

Or queer.

It's almost inevitable, with heterosexuality as the defined norm, the standard idea of life that governs everyday existence, that non-heterosexuality become an immediate, salient political issue.

To be queer extends beyond not fitting into the typical sexual trend set out for most people. It is necessarily, almost defiantly, a means of self-definition. A way of stating who you are in opposition to what most people have been conditioned to think is normal.

But the issue has wider applications.

How are heterosexual beings intended to respond to queer phenomenon? They are all normal. How should they relate to people who, by their very sexual nature, are inescapably different from them?

Homosexuality is a human thing, it is as valid as heterosexuality. It is a question of sexual desire, of emotional yearning, of not agreeing with the common wisdom indoctrinated upon people from Day One.

If heterosexuals see, say, a nude picture of an attractive same-sex person, how are they to respond? Society tells straight people that it's not normal to be turned on, aroused, or even feel sexually curious, because this will change their identity. It's wrong to be a fag or a dyke. That's something reserved for the minority people on this earth: the Other.

We hope to abolish this concept of Other, of queer people as sexual beings who experience desire in a way heterosexuals will never have to be concerned about.

It's society's ideal: most people get married to a member of the opposite sex, move into a suburban house, have children and lead ordinary lives. For the moment, that

doesn't seem to be a possible option for queer people. Normalcy is both a privilege and a bane they have been denied.

You don't have to be queer to take a transgressive stand against the taken-for-granted truths of this world. You don't even have to do anything transgressive if that idea isn't your fancy. But heterosexuals all do a disservice to themselves, as autonomous individuals, if they just go along with the assumed fact that they belong exclusively, uniquely, unexceptionally to the straight world.

Your life is supposed to be your choice: but if all of your sexual identity is just what society has told you to do, then whose choice is it really?

What does Queer mean these days? Queer...is who you want to sleep with. Queer...is the sociopolitical implication of who you do, or don't, sleep with. Queer...disputes the genderized boundaries of sexual identity. Queer...is a subversive attack on the norms which regulate accepted sexual conduct. Queer...stretches the normative definition of accepted sexual conduct. Queer...is a defined and bounded category which contrasts itself with the category of "straight". Queer...is a recognition of the fluid and shifting nature of identity. Queer...is a labelled sexual/social identity. Queer...is that which exists outside of a label-structured way of perceiving identity. Queer...is an

anti-category which has become entangled in the very oppositions it set out to blur. Queer...is a culture which involves dressing up a certain way, speaking in certain terms, hanging out with a certain crowd. Queer...used to be gay, then it became gay&lesbian, now it means all sorts of stuff. Queer...is a community composed of people who have come out of dark and dusty places. Queer...is a discourse which has emerged from the space which is excluded from the boundaries of rationalistic thought. Queer...is a re-definition of what is good, right, and proper.

Queer...is people who lead eccentric lives. Queer...is just another way of thinking about sex. Queer is...

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UNBECOMING GAY

Advocating the Demise of the Gay Identity

by Rob Sheldon

"Rob, Keep the Fight and Raise Some Hell!"

Those are the soon-to-be-ironic words Michaelangelo Signorile wrote in my copy of his *Outing Yourself* when I championed his cause at McGill two years ago. The first chapter is titled "identifying yourself" and introduces Signorile's twelve steps to "becoming gay." His first exercise of twelve is titled "Mirror, Mirror," and has the reader look

changed from a behaviour ("that man sleeps with other men") to an actual person with specific traits ("that man is a homosexual.") It was the negative traits that this homosexual figure had acquired which Rowland wished to dispute—not its existence in the first place.

In an interview, Chuck Rowland stated that he was struck one day with the knowledge that, "We have to organize, and why don't we identify with other minorities, such as

the procedures in Signorile's book to become that particular brand of oppressed cultural minority that is gay. Here I can only state the basic premise of the procedure. It is this: the act of becoming gay is a refutation of a century of stereotypes and hatred. The first step toward becoming gay is an acceptance of fate—that you are one of those hateful creatures that society has conditioned you to reject. We are all dealt our cards, after all. The second step is a rejection of that conditioning. Note Exercise 3 in *Outing Yourself*, where you are directed to write down and then refute the hateful stereotypes:

I am gay	faggot	smart
I am gay	freak	fun
I am gay	pansy	exciting

And Now for Gay Pride

The process Signorile outlines in his book is an extremely challenging one for an individual to undertake. Even if you are his star pupil, when you become gay, you commit yourself to defending whatever positive image of gay you have constructed in yourself, to the often hateful, and always stereotypical, images of gay which everyone else has.

It is a very few, however, who are able to make a complete negative to positive self-transformation. For some people, especially the young, the challenge in becoming gay is impossible, and they kill themselves rather than face the mirror. Many gay men are unable to fully complete the equation ("faggot = smart") and kill themselves more slowly with substance abuse and unsafe sex. More become reluctant gay men; unhappy, depressed and/or sexually dysfunctional. And most do not even get this far; they lead lives under the opposing identity: straight.

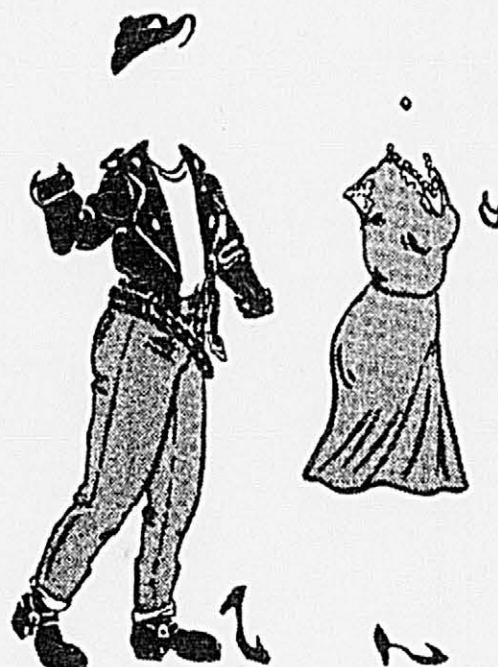
The people above are unable to make lovely in themselves what has always been so unpleasant in the eyes of so many for so long. The catch-phrase "self-loathing" (i.e. gay-loathing) has been invented for them, as people who cannot bear the burden of a gay identity.

Letting Gay Go

I mean to suggest here that the card some of us are dealt which says we are intrinsically gay can be let go, that it is no more than a destructive illusion of varying degree for all those who undertake its challenge.

The renunciation of the gay identity is a commitment to embracing all aspects of one's person—including the attraction to the same and/or opposite sex—to become the integral person one is. The happy gay is liberated from having to prove it to everyone else, the sad gay can stop hating his gay self, and start loving his actual self, and the suicidal teen need no longer despair of becoming what he least desires. Furthermore, when people stop trying to become gay themselves, they also stop others from trying to make them gay with their own ideas of what that identity entails.

The Powers that Be, and HIV



When I say above that gay is an "illusion," I do not mean to suggest that the card is never dealt; it most certainly is. Not by Science or God, however, but by a belief that same-sexual relations are the wrong relations.

What better way to prevent people from having sex with their own sex, than by telling them they will become gay when they do so?

Initial government and media inaction with regard to AIDS can be explained in this light, where disease and death were just two more charming attributes of being gay.

However, when it became clear



Cobb County, Ga., citizens make their feelings about gays and lesbians known.

to politicians and the media that this belief would create complacency within the heterosexual community, which might lead to its infection, the face of AIDS, as it were, had to change. Instead of a "gay disease" spread by specific people, AIDS became a disease spread by specific behaviours.

The de-gay-ing of AIDS averted what could have been a disaster of public perception; it also showed that being gay is itself a disaster of public perception—and is being maintained as such by those in power.

Letting Gay Rights Go

The biggest obstacle to a movement based in the notion of racial equal rights, as I have shown gay rights to be, is race itself. At its most fundamental, the normalizing of a racial group depends upon the ability of that group to refute and change stereotypes. A black man walking down the street becomes the site of others' projected images and stereotypes everyday—he cannot hide the colour of his skin. People with same-sex desire are not born pink, so why, knowing how alarmingly racist this society is, would they adopt the politics of race to win society's approval of that desire? Furthermore, in a movement based on a notion of "gay" rights, any legislation passed, any popular sentiment or discourse changed, is bound to exclude those sexual "mulattos" who are not "purely" gay or straight, most notably bisexuals.

continued on page 6



into a mirror and say over and over, "no matter if it makes you cry, I am gay, I am gay, I am gay."

His book is a clever manifesto and indoctrination manual for those who are, or who desire to become, gay-identified. It is this act of "becoming" which I question here, its origins and pitfalls; and it is the demise of the this act which I will propose, accompanied by what I believe to be a powerful personal and political alternative.

Building Gay Rights : A Politics of Race

Signorile's manual is a descendant of the Mattachine Society, America's first well-organized homosexual rights group. The organization was founded just after World War II by Chuck Rowland, an ex-cadet. The reason for this group's existence can be traced indirectly to a shift in thinking around the year 1870. At this time, by many accounts, the conception of same-sex desire

the blacks and the Jews?" He goes on to say, "I had never known a black, but I did know one Jew in our town." (He did not know then that Hitler had made such an arbitrary comparison a few years before.) His epiphany would convince hundreds in the nineteen-fifties that they were an oppressed cultural minority who, like the blacks and Jews, deserved equal rights.

The only problem with this strategy was that people had to become a member of the oppressed cultural minority, for no one is born "gay." People are born "already oppressed," as in people of colour, or they are not, as in the 100% white, male Mattachines. In either case, it was thought, people had to become a member of the oppressed gay minority to function politically. Signorile is but one example of how this sentiment works to this day.

Building Gay People

One need only read and execute

Chai & Cultua!

Chai & Cultua! is a state in which sensibility of Queer, erotic, urban, bliss celebrates its inter-community diversity of culture, *aray baba*, I mean Cultua! Well, dahlings, I didn't mean to get heavy on ya & on our first meeting too, *tauba tauba*, such show of candid ejaculations. But the thing is, *jaan*, that for the real of fabulousness, for this self-identified-Muslim-Queer-South-Asian-in-Diaspora, it is also important to engage in relationship with the paradigm of politica.

In any event, I hope your post-Ramadan days are slow, as in the Year of the Ox, slow with circular motions of carnal pleasures. After reaching thirty days of spiritual nirvana in Ramadan, I celebrated Eid by reaching one nite of sexual nirvana. One nite with *him* was NOT enough, 'specially because the connection with his mind was orgasmic too. In this dry-spell of differed closure, this panorama of karmic rustles, this processing the delicious Eid present from Allah, and the tussles between should I call him or not, I write. I write to sheer Brown Queer presence and space, in the form of a scene, a "happening". The cultural scene is the true testimony of the diversity of this homeboy called Montréal.

Last year was full of delights of an empowering kind. Indian poet R. Raj Rao visited our city. I had the somewhat problematic pressure of interviewing him for my show, the Friday Edition of off the hour, on C K U T 90.3FM. I didn't like his

elitist, class oriented stance, coupled with not taking responsibility for his gay activism. But, all in all, his writings do further the cause of gay rights in India. I went to see a short film made around his poems at a screening by Tom Waugh. I was elated to see brown

boys in sensual and intimate moments. After being bombarded by the constant onslot of blond blue-eyed imagery everyday, it was refreshing to see *desi* sensibilities around Queer issues.

On the Hole it was empowering to witness the Brown Queer space created by someone not living in Diaspora, but still making

tural Group) at Studio 303. That's where I met my *Mashook-e-Khushgil*—my first Brown relationship. Oh, last year, my darhings, was also the year your's truly was unanimously elected on Divers/Cité's Board of Directors, first Brown, hell first person of the colour on the Board. BIG CIRCULAR SNAP & ONE POINT SNAP!

Well, dahlings, how Queer are you? 'am "Queer as Fuck!", whatever that means; I saw it on a tee-shirt and loved it and humm, ohmm the background was, aaai, ooie the rainbow f l a g ! SubhaanAllah!, ...in other words: Hallelujah!

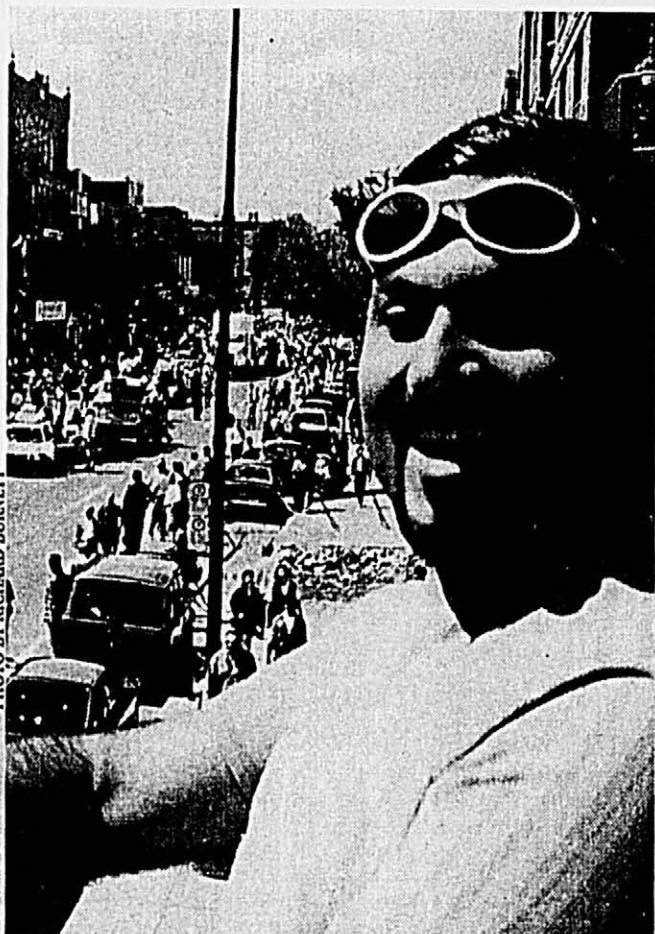
If you are in a mood for reading, pick up the new *Men on Men* gay shorts story anthology. In it you will find, "Black and Blue", a story by *trikone* magazine's editor, Sundip Roy,

which is about shadism and altered identity in a racist South Asian context. The story is brilliantly written in a humorous self-denial tone. The juxtapositioning with a post-climactic self-realization, gives weight to the position of addressing and dismantling issues. Both the anthology and the magazine are available at the only Queer bookstore in town—L'Androgyne. Scope it out, *yaar*.

Also to watch out for is artist/producer Shaan Syed, who has just started a whimsical, fun, and creative arts association with Concordia art student Aurlane Sokoloski, which is called *sense art*. They intend to bring Montrealers closer to art with their tactical "just do it" approach. Their first cabaret soirée/vernissage *my brave, brave heart* was a huge, huge success story.

Well my darling *desi* and other divas it is time for your *berafa* host to say *KuddaHafiz* with *pyar*. Stay Brown people and to all the Coconuts out there: Think Mango, sweeties.

since its inception. However he did become rather skiddish when being referred to as "Queer"—I guess it's a generational thang! Last year was also self-affirming to be part of *Darbar*: an inter-cultural show of Saathi (South Asian Queer Cul-



MONTRÉAL PRIDE '95

Glossary

array baba - Oh Boy!
tauba tauba - Oh my God!
jaan - dear
desi - brown
Mashook-e-Khushgil - my cute lover
Sabhaan Allah - God Is Great!
 Wow! Hallelujah
yaar - androgenous term for friend/pal/
 buddy
berafa - sultry
KuddaHafiz - goodbye
pyar - love
coconut - brown skin, white attitude
 (same principle as Oreo)
mango - refers to "Mango Boy", on the
 lusciousness of brown boys.

Lesbian Medical Association of Physicians Symposium. It was empowering to get the inter-generational viewpoint from a Brown Queer, who has been at the forefront of the association

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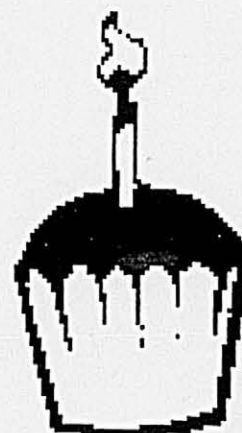
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The Collective Closet

Community and integration as a source of oppression

by Rich Lafferty

Since Stonewall, queer activists and politicians have worked to create a queer nation, a group which is united by sexuality. That collectiveness, the idea of lumping all things queer into a so-called community, has exhausted its possibilities. We have become so concerned with protecting our subculture that we essentially have forgotten our original challenge and have lost sight of our goals. We have deprioritized the fight for change in order to create a queer community.

And what kind of a community is it? Sure, we're different from "them", but only in terms of sexuality. Just like the heterosexual community, we are diverse in gender, race, religion, politics — even in sexuality itself, the supposed uniting force behind the Queer Community. Yet we continue to mislead ourselves by believing that what we try to present is a homogeneous, continuous group, consisting of people who are defined solely by their sexuality. We have emphasized the fact that "we are here and queer," that we are different from the heterosexual norms, that we are a unified body — and society as a whole has believed it, taking that concept of difference and using it against us.

It is time to realize that the concept of a queer community is inaccurate; such a community never existed, and it is not in our interests to suggest that it has. We have forced ourselves into a group in order to validate our existence, but have failed to meet our goals of acceptance and equality within the group; yet we expect society as a whole to accept us as their equals. We have created a queer subculture, and pretend to strive for equality.

It is not enough to create a par-

allel existence with mainstream society. We must work on creating a whole society in which we are a component, a society in which acceptance is implicit and in which oppression based on sexuality, race, gender, or any other stratifying identity does not exist. The queer community has turned into a microcosm of society as a whole, the very society that we are supposedly trying to change.

In the late 1970s, feminists such as bell hooks realized that their battle was not one for gender equality; rather, it was to create a society that did not have the elements of prejudice, discrimination, and stratification that exist in current society. It was not enough to be equal to men. After all, which men did they want to be equal to? How could they be "equal" when there was still something to be equal to?

The queer community has been blind to one of the basic principles of our society — that personal success is to be gained at all costs. We try to integrate ourselves into existing economic and social paradigms, blind to the fact that those same paradigms were created to exclude non-mainstream groups. We strive for change after change — marriage, acceptance in the workplace, same-sex benefits, sexual freedom — without realizing that we are playing into the hands of the heterosexist society that is oppressing us. They are capable of taking these small changes and using them against us, as proof that changes are taking place, that everything will eventually be all right.

The queer community has to stop focusing on small battles of

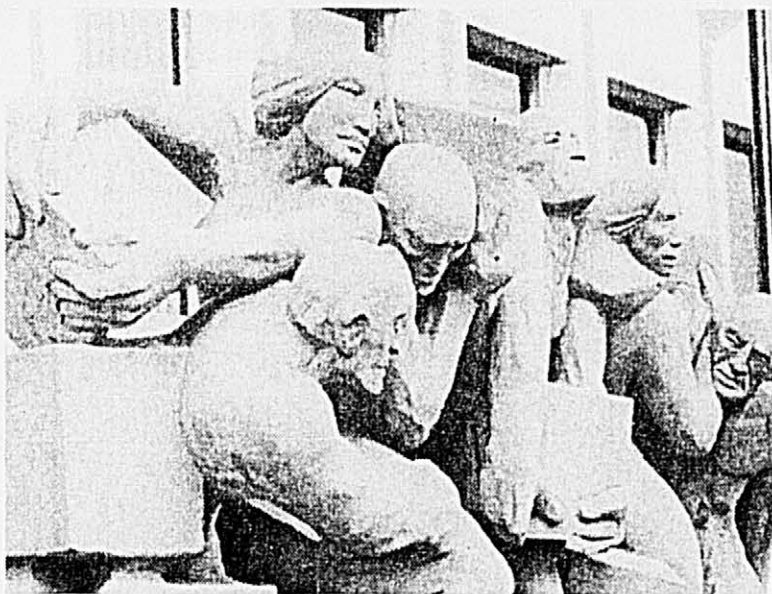
equality and discrimination, and start looking at the big picture. Can we ever attain our goals of acceptance and equality in a society which continues to oppress all that is not male, straight, and white? The answer is a resounding 'no'. It is not enough to try to change the current system. The system works well as it is — it is a system that has been created to keep the white straight man in a position of power, and it does exactly that.

We must stop our repeated emphasis on the social equality of all sexual identities, and start working to eradicate, in hooks' words, "the cultural basis of group oppression." We must realize that it is not enough to delineate safe spaces, when un-

the queer population.

Queer rights are black rights are women's rights are human rights. In our attempts at solidarity we have alienated ourselves from each other, pretending that we are a homogeneous group that shares common concerns exclusive to our queerness. We have failed to see that we are trying to assimilate ourselves into a culture which has been developed to exclude us. It is not enough to be queer; rather, we must create a society in which being queer doesn't matter.

The basis of queer politics, of queer activism, of queer existence, must concentrate on eradicating the social systems which have created a stratified society in which oppres-



safe spaces still exist; that gay marriage is an empty concept when it is still modeled after a heterosexual institution designed to reaffirm the centrality of a male-female relationship; that creating queer businesses creates yet another excuse for the predominantly heterosexual world of finance to segregate and exclude

the status quo. The queer community must not be content with the creation and maintenance of a subculture. Rather, we must seize the opportunity to begin a new era, to create a society without oppression and prejudice, where the dualistic concepts of gender, race, and sexuality cease to exist.

unbecoming gay - cont'd. from p. 4

When the notion of gay rights is taken down, so too will fall its political opposition. What needs to emerge in its stead is a politics

which advocates the right of individuals to sleep with whichever consenting adult he or she chooses. The difference? The new politics of sexual rights would shift the focus

from normalizing sexual identities, such as "gay," to normalizing sexual behaviours. Rising to the occasion in the nick of time, no doubt, would be a new oppositional force bent on the continued regulation of sex.

This political reshuffle will not end discrimination and violence against people who defy sexual norms, but it will allow for a much wider and more effective field of resistance to these forces than the old system of race-based identity.

"I'm Not Gay, But My Girlfriend Is"

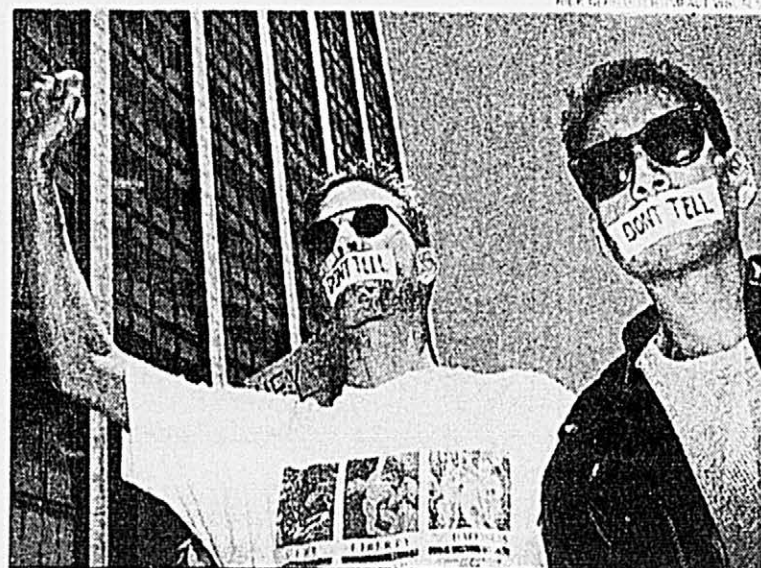
When Ann Hesché stated on Oprah that she was not lesbian or gay, and had never slept with a woman before Ellen, the audience was struck dumb. Oprah spoke first: "you mean you weren't born this way?"

Hesché's statement both exemplifies and shows the political effec-

tiveness of a sexual rights movement. She has firmly disallowed—resisted—the projection of stereotypes onto herself that would normally have taken place if she had come out, like Ellen did, as gay. Her question is not why can't I be this, but is instead, why can't I do this? In asking such a question, she is refusing the role of the subordinate, and is effectively levelling the field of debate between herself and the audience, over what amounts to a difference in taste—not the dread "lifestyle," etc.

Different from race-based gay rights, the strength of a sex-based sexual rights movement lies not in the refuting of stereotypes, but in the disallowing of them altogether. This un-identification broadens the

Researchers discover more evidence linking homosexuality to genetic causes.



President Clinton's compromise on the military ban leaves gay and lesbian activists up in arms.

EVENTS

Thursday, October 16, 1997

LBGTM Women's group meets in Shatner 423, 28h30.

Friday October 17, 1997

An evening of Folk Music at the Yellow Door with Jody Anker. Admission \$3. Doors open at 20h00, open stage to follow.

LBGTM's Coming Out Group meets at 17h30 in the basement of 3521 University.

LBGTM's Men's Group meets at 19h00 in the basement of 3521 University.

Saturday, October 18, 1997

Another evening of Folk Music at the Yellow Door with Jacky opening for Folkus.ca with Glenna Lee McConnell. Admission \$5 - \$6. Doors open at 20h00.

Wednesday, October 22, 1997

Stephane Dion, Federal Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs will be speaking on the future of Canada. 19h30-21h00 at Moot Court. 3644 Peel Street.

Joseph Pace, author of the upcoming book *Diet for A New Canada* will be speaking on the impacts of animal-based agriculture in Canada. Leacock 26 at 19h30.

Ongoing

Going for an HIV test? Peer Health Education is looking for individuals for an audio broadcast project who would be comfortable sharing their experience. Please call Darrell at 398-6017.

Queer Line offers a confidential listening and referral service weeknights between 20h00 and 23h00. Call 398-6822.

plain of resistance by implicating in sexuality all those who are sexual, not just those whose skin would be pink. Conversely, the opposition is reduced to dictating to all people, not just gays, what activities they can and cannot engage in sexually.

When individuals refute the gay identity within themselves and begin to interact with others as themselves, real sites of resistance will open up, like they did for Hesché, and a sexual rights movement will be born.

Rob Sheldon is the former editor of Flux Magazine. He was a gay man for three years before he realized that he just liked to date men.



Why I love the blood drive

by David D'Andrea

I'm HIV-negative, but because I'm a bisexual man, I'm not allowed to give blood. This apparent unfairness has pushed LBGTM (of which I'm a member) to protest the Red Cross blood drive held in conjunction with SSMU. The protest, like the blood drive itself, seems to be an annual institution at McGill. This year's action follows more inflammatory protests and counter-protests of previous years, which last year escalated to the cancellation of the blood drive and a move to impeach then-SSMU president Chris Carter. The problem is the questionnaire used to screen potential donors. Now-notorious question 15 asks whether "If male, have you had sex with another male, even once" since 1977. Answering yes disqualifies you from giving blood.

LBGTM has several reasons for opposing the Red Cross questionnaire. They claim that changing the wording of the questionnaire might allow more blood to be donated to the Red Cross without compromising safety. They believe that the question perpetrates the stereotype that AIDS is a "gay disease" that straight people don't have to concern themselves with. But to most members of LBGTM, the core issue is one of discrimination: people are barred from giving blood, not on the basis of their seropositivity, but on their sexual orientation. The protest against the Red Cross questionnaire gets its force from an idea which is deeply ingrained in our society: that all laws and rules must apply universally to all people. For society to be fair, it cannot defer to an aristocracy, nor can it ask blacks to go to the back of the bus. The Red Cross questionnaire is just another example of unfair treatment based on an arbitrary characteristic. It doesn't matter how serious the harm it does is - discrimination is unacceptable.

The problem with this stance is that nobody really believes it. There are many situations where we recognise that a policy may be justified, even though it is based on distinctions between groups. The Women's Union is allowed to exclude men from its events, and LBGTM is allowed to restrict its executive to queer students, because we recognise that the benefits outweigh the harm done. In some situations we actually demand policies that discriminate between various social groups. One such situation is the epidemic of HIV infection among queer men. Advocacy groups have long insisted that safe-sex information be specifically aimed at the

queer male community because of its high rate of HIV infection. In 1993, Act-Up Paris accused the French government of being party to genocide. The crime: its HIV awareness policy, aimed at the entire population without concern for sexual orientation, permitted one of the highest rates of HIV infection among queer men in western Europe. In these situations we see that AIDS is a queer issue, but then we want to turn around and declare that there is no such thing as a high risk group, just high risk behaviour. We just can't have it both ways.

There are good reasons why Question 15 in particular is justified. The rate of HIV infection among queer men is so much higher than among the general population that it makes medical sense to screen us out. Changing the question to refer to specific risky behaviours rather than risk groups won't necessarily improve the questionnaire's effectiveness. It is easy for university students to forget that people vary in literacy level, and not everybody understands what "unprotected anal sex" means. For something as crucial as the blood supply, the overriding concern is safety, and that means that it's better to keep out as much infected blood as possible even if it means throwing some good blood away. And concerns that the questionnaire promotes a false stereotype about HIV seem unwarranted. The Red Cross questionnaire is not a major source of information about HIV for most people, and the implication of the questionnaire—that some groups have higher rates of HIV infection than others—is true.

Changing the Red Cross questionnaire to be blind to social groups might make us feel better, but it wouldn't address the real problem. The real problem is the tragedy of HIV, and in particular how it has affected the queer male community. And the point is a general one: our fixation on formal equality sometimes leads us to ignore the real differences in society that need to be addressed. The simple truth is that a system that treats everybody the same is not always the best system. Leftists have long recognised that the free market, the very paradigm of a neutral system, can produce the most brutal inequalities. The issue boils down to a crucial question of strategy: should we spend all our energies demanding a formal equality, or should we fight for the real interests of real people?

Michelangelo, artist • Leonardo da Vinci, artist • Oscar Wilde, playwright • Socrates, philosopher • Hans Christian Andersen, writer • Plato, philosopher • Lord R.S.S. Baden-Powell, founder of Boy Scouts • Peter Iljitsch Tchaikovsky, composer • Gertrude Stein, writer and "Gert's Pub" namesake • Andy Warhol, artist • Alexander the Great, ruler • Alan Turing, mathematician • Nikola Tesla, physicist • Virginia Woolf, writer • Walt Whitman, writer • Joan Baez, singer • David Bowie, musician • Marlon Brando, actor • Melissa Etheridge, musician • Billie Jean King, tennis star • Johnny Mathis, musician • Morrissey, musician • Lou Reed, musician • Yves Saint-Laurent, designer • Benjamin Britten, composer • Tennessee Williams, playwright • Keith Haring, artist • Dusty Springfield, singer • Calvin Klein, designer • Robert Mapplethorpe, photographer • Cecil Rhodes, founder of scholarship • Gore Vidal, writer • William Shakespeare, playwright • James Dean, actor • Cary Grant, actor • Marlene Dietrich, actress • Lord Byron, poet • Edward II, monarch • Greta Garbo, actress • William Burroughs, writer • Ernst Rohm, Nazi leader • Allen Ginsberg, writer • Julius Caesar, emperor • Cole Porter, composer • Errol Flynn, actor • Truman Capote, writer • Jack Kerouac, writer • Sappho, Greek poet • James I, monarch of "King James Bible" fame • Ivan the Terrible, czar • Augustine, saint • Jean Cocteau, artist • Aaron Copeland, composer • Sergei Diaghilev, impresario • Amelia Earhart, aviator • Malcolm Forbes, publisher • Julius III, pope • Louis XIII, king • Ronald McDonald (Bob Brandon), clown • Paul, apostle • Sir Arthur Sullivan, composer • T.E. Lawrence, "of Arabia" • J. Edgar Hoover, FBI bigwig • Chris Carter, ex-SSMU president • Tom of Finland, artist • Svend Robinson, NDP MP • Timothy Findley, author • Gail Scott, author • Jeanette Winterson, author

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Manchester

More than 100 000 people turned out for Manchester, England's gay Mardi Gras in late August, reported London's The Pink Paper.

The weekend included a parade, a king and queen contest, a festival and a street party.

United Kingdom

The Immigration Minister, Mike O'Brien, has today announced that he will introduce a policy to allow same-sex couples in long term, committed relationships to stay in the UK. The policy will come into effect as from Monday 13 October.

Tokyo

Government agencies are "obligated to pay careful attention to the situation of homosexuals as a minority and to guarantee that their rights and interests be upheld," the court said. "Indifference and ignorance regarding homosexuality are inexcusable on the part of persons in the position of wielding governmental authority." - Tokyo High Court

Bulgaria

Gays in Sofia, Bulgaria, celebrated the one-year anniversary of the gay club Adonis this month, reports correspondent Nikolai Zhorov Georgiev of the gay organization Gemini.

Strasbourg

"There is not objective and reasonable justification for the maintenance of a higher minimum age of consent to male homosexual, than to heterosexual, acts and that the application discloses discriminatory treatment in the exercise of the applicant's right to respect for private life." - European Commission of Human Rights

Singapore

The Singapore queer group appeals in the effort to government has ordered th

Australia

Australia's Senate has vo
Tax Assessment Act that w
couples.

Thailand

The Rajabhat Institute, which operates 36 Thai teacher colleges, has lifted its year-old ban on gay students. But the institute simultaneously proposed a new rule banning "sexually abnormal" people. Rajabhat Council member, Wanlop Piyamanotham said sexual abnormalities include copulation with inanimate objects, exposing oneself in public and deriving pleasure from sadomasochistic acts.

South Africa

South Africa's National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality and the national Human Rights Commission have filed a High Court suit against several laws that ban gay sex. They hope to delete the common-law offense of sodomy, the common-law crime of unnatural offenses between men, a Criminal Procedure Act measure that allows anyone to arrest anyone else they suspect of committing sodomy, a Security Officers Act sodomy ban and a Sexual Offences Act ban on gay sex.

Although South Africa's new constitution is the only one in the world to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, many older laws still discriminate against homosexuals.

Nelson, B.C.

About 250 people turned out over Labour Day weekend for the second annual gay-pride parade in Nelson, British Columbia, population 8 113. The parade included a dozen dykes on bikes and was followed by a rally and dance.

Surrey, B.C.

The Surrey School Board recently banned books depicting children with same-sex parents. These books include *One Dad, Two Dad, Brown Dad, Blue Dad* and *Asha's Two Mommies*. Lawsuits are in progress.

Washington, D.C.

The Reverend Troy D. Perry, founder of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, the world's largest gay and lesbian spiritually organization, has received an invitation to participate in the upcoming White House Conference on Hate Crimes on November 10, 1997. "Use the full talents of all our people, regardless of race or religious faith, national origin or sexual orientation, gender or disability." - Bill Clinton

People Like Us, has exhausted all legal options and the group to cease operations.

ted down an amendment to the Income tax which would have recognized same-sex

Brazil

Brazil's Congress will soon vote on a gay partnership bill which will grant registered gay couples rights in such areas as inheritance, social social security and immigration. "If approved, the law will also serve as an important precedent for the whole region, possibly stimulating similar social changes in other Latin American and Caribbean countries." - Federal Deputy Marta Suplicy

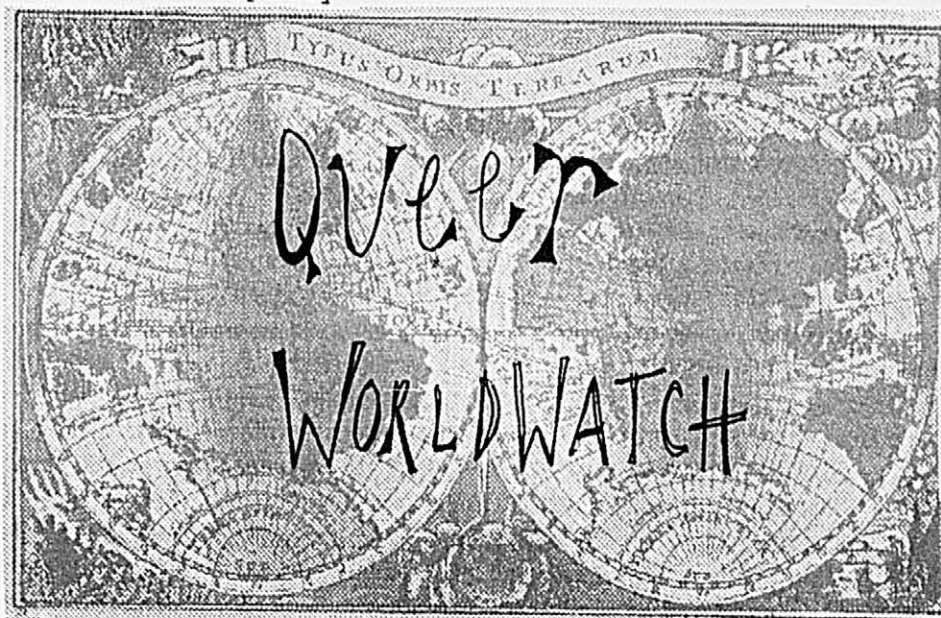


Image et Nation: Pink Culture in all its glory

An invitation to the sensual & vivid world of Lesbian & Gay Film

by Salman M. Husain

It was ten years ago that Diffusion Gaies et Lesbiennes du Québec (DLGQ) started organizing the annual *Image et Nation* International Lesbian and Gay film and video Festival in Montréal. Now it is the largest of its kind in Canada, fourth largest in North America and the third best attended film festival in Montréal. The buzz is that this year, *Image et Nation* will become the second best attended film festival in Montréal.

The film festival's deliciously decadent tenth anniversary celebration commenced last night with fire. *Fire* is one of the two opening films along with *Never Met Picasso*. This year's festivities will occur at Cinéma ONF, Institute Goethe, Concordia VA 114 and new comer to the scene salle 6 of Cinéma La Parisienne. Free programmes are also available at these locals.

Open sesame fire and the closure is in the water

Fire is a film by Deepa Mehta, a South Asian Canadian. One might recall her *Sam And Me* and her premier film *Camilla* with fondness. But the 'fondness' evoked by her earlier films is just about to give way to passionately burning fires of the soul, created by the simultaneous, multi-level perspectives in *Fire*. But this is just the beginning; *Fire* is the first in Mehta's trilogy *Fire* sizzles with the story of the self empowering struggles of two middle class women in New Delhi, India. In an interview with SAVVY, Mehta explains: "What I want to stress

through my films is that yes, we Indian women are worthy and deserving of life of our own choice." *Fire* has won nine awards in six film festivals from Favorite Foreign Film, in Paris, to Silver Hugo for Best Actress, in L.A. Sultry, salty, softly seductive, Shabana Azmi is actually the recipient of two best actress awards.

Never Met Picasso is the other film on the opening list of the Festival. It is about "The Lost Generation", which has met neither Andy Warhol nor Keith Haring. The film is superbly played by a quite well known and brilliant cast of "indie" film faces.

The film revolves around a 30 year old, "art fag", Andrew Magnus (Alexis Arquette) and his crises. These do not include his preoccupation with finding Mr. Right and his interactions with insightful and absurd characters. The part in which Magnus interacts with his gay uncle, mentor Alfred (Alvin Espstien), before and after his death, touches on the inter-generation gay/Queer issue. This is important because it puts issues in a historical context.

The characterization of Lucy is played strongly by Georgia Ragsdale. Lucy is a sculptor who is fabo in Jackie O. drag. The film looks

though a passionate eye at the lives of Boston's South-End in the late 1990's.

The closure is poised in Kelli Herd's *It's In The Water*, a film set in the small town of Azalea Springs. It focuses on the country club members of "The League," who

ing people gay. There is also the oppressed wife, Alex Statten, with her courage to work at the AIDS hospice, and who is subsequently discovered in a supply closet kissing Grace Miller. Another love affair is brewing with Mark Anderson and Tomas, the house painter. These

events reflect what happens to individuals when homophobic hysteria takes over seemingly ordinary people.

The ten years

The groupings of the thematic programme are done in frames of 10 years. 10 years of Impossible Loves, 10 years of Identity and Movement, 10 years of Canadian Creations etc. There is an interesting retrospective of John Greyson shorts and feature films including *Uncut and Zero Patience*. These frames outline a picture of what the festival has been offering since 1988.

This year's schedule reflects an incredibly diverse programming. *Latin Boys Go To Hell*, for example, a film by Ela Troyano with Montréal boy, Mike Ruiz—air brushed to the max, but at least not a typical blond blue-eyed Californian surfer muscle boy image. It's a story about twenty-two year old Justin who finds himself in murky waters when his cousin Angel comes

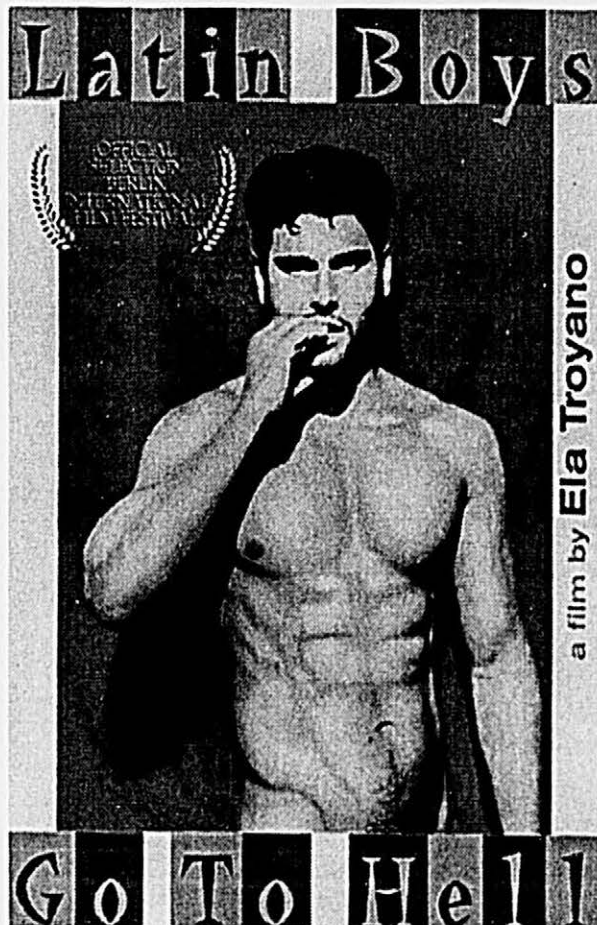
for a visit; the thing is, Angel is no angel. The film is set on a club culture backdrop with straight and Queer characters. The forefront, however, is the coming out story of Justin.

Gael Morel's moving L O V E story *A toute vitesse*, explores issues of class, race and nationality. There are a good number of French films this year, notably; *Nana*, *George et moi...* and *Sortie 234*.

The AIDS segment is also rich, with *Crocodile Tears*, *Green Plaid Shirt*, *Frank's Cock*, *The Ads epidemic* etc. The premiere showings include *Homo Heights* with living legend The [very] *Naked Civil Servant*, Quentin Crisp, as well as *Boysfriends*, *Watermelon Woman*, *Latin Boys Go To Hell* etc. Also there is an extended lesbian section of this with such superb films as *Reservaat*, *Entwined*, *The Watermelon Woman*, *Isle od Lesbos* and *Margarete Westcotts Stolen Moments—a century of lesbian culture & identity* is especially worth watching.

Special events include Tom Waugh's *XXX-citation*, a riveting journey of the evolution in erotic cinema from 1950 to the present. *Pervers/Cite*, with Ross Higgins, is a reflection on gay social life in Montréal from 1930 to 1980. *The Other Dyke TV* is about lesbian space on T.V. and, in collaboration with Bad Boy Club Foundation, one of Fassbinder's films, *Querelle*, was shown as part of Black & Blue Festival 97.

Image et Nation is an invitation for everyone to see the trials and tribulations of the artists, in pink and proud culture.



Come out, come out wherever you are

Being queer in the faculty with those nifty calculators

by Anonymous

From the first instance that civilizations learned how to manipulate the elements, man has sought to engineer his discoveries to provide him with a better standard of living. This still holds true today in that it is primarily men who are engineers - those who design and build much of what you see around you.

It may be due to this fact that engineering is perceived as a macho, male-dominated, misogynistic and homophobic profession. Engineering is one of the last hold outs of male-dominated faculties. Even medicine can boast a 1:1 male/female ratio, where just a couple of decades ago women doctors were as rare as snow in July. Currently, the enrollment of women in engi-

neering here at McGill hovers somewhere around 30%: meaning that in an average class of 60 students, there are only 18 females taking up the seats.

But this article is not about women in engineering, it's about queers in engineering. Given some of the statistics about the queer population (North American average: 10%, McGill: 30% - don't quote me on these, they're just rough approximations), engineers seem to once again be the exception to the rule with an (out) gay population of approximately 1% (numbers taken from my own count of people I know). So how do we function within this minority? It would seem that many within the faculty

have taken a "don't ask, don't tell" approach to dealing with their classmates, friends and professors, but are relatively out with one another.

This is not to say that engineering students are oppressed within the walls of the engineering buildings, but that it is more difficult to "advertise" our sexual orientation, or show our pride by wearing rainbow flags or pink triangles on our school bags given the above statistics. So, are the students of engineering homophobic? On the whole, no. We are usually so busy with assignments, projects, exams and tests that an individual's sexual orientation is not the most pressing issue of the moment.

But don't expect to hear "Dancing Queen" or "I will Survive" any time soon at an Engineering Blues Pub. I believe our reluctance to come out publicly stems more from the fact that coming out is not absolutely necessary to function as a student. Also, the faculty is comprised of quite a few individuals with a middle and far-eastern heritage where social norms and religious beliefs are not as liberal as they are here in North America.

I myself have never encountered any problems coming out to someone; however most of the people I'm out to are not classmates, and I therefore do not see them on a daily basis, which is

probably a third point as to why coming out within the faculty is difficult. Being queer, however, has not restricted me from student politics or faculty sports leagues; nor has it curbed my desire to seek graduate work, and even teaching positions here at McGill.

Perhaps if we were more visible, it would make future generations of engineering students more aware of our existence. I would encourage any students (especially engineering) who are questioning their sexuality to seek out some peers to talk to and to partake in more queer events around McGill and Montréal. And I would also like the closeted engineering population to know that there ARE others like you.

The Changing Faces of AIDS Activism

Queer men may be stepping back from the forefront of the AIDS movement

by Darrell Tan

Seventeen homosexual-rights protesters were arrested outside Trinity Church in downtown Montréal during a rally to demand quicker government approval of drugs that might combat Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Hundreds of protesters stayed behind police lines, but some crossed the barricades and sat in the street to block traffic. They were arrested, charged with disorderly conduct and released.

Thus read the caption under a photo in the March 25, 1987 edition of *The New York Times*. ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), a group which remains one of the most active organizations lobbying for change today, had united in anger over the US government's mismanagement of the AIDS crisis. Their queer-dominated demonstration on Wall Street was launched to "protest the profiteering of pharmaceutical companies (especially Burroughs Wellcome, manufacturer of AZT-a reverse transcriptase inhibitor drug that slows down multiplication of virus cells in the af-

ected person's body)".

ized heterosexism and homophobia in Western society have made living with HIV/AIDS all the more difficult. The AIDS-phobic and stigmatizing messages voiced by institutions in the late 1980's inspired the gay community to become involved in AIDS activism.

More recently, however, public health messages have emphasized that anyone can contract HIV by participating in high-risk behaviour regardless of their sexual orientation. Postmodern thinking has led to popular concepts of rejecting labels and conceptualizing identity as fluid, rather than fixed. Society is being forced to dispel the myth of a one-to-one relationship between AIDS and gayness. To what extent, then, has AIDS been 'de-gay'd'? What is the face of AIDS activism today?

'De-Gaying' AIDS?

According to Dr. Vinh-Kim Nguyen, a doctor at the Montreal General Hospital's Immune Deficiency Treatment Centre and Assist-

number of reasons. Aside from the potential it provides for stereotyping gay men as 'AIDS carriers', another problem relates to historical inaccuracies.

Anna-Louise Crago, an AIDS activist currently doing HIV/Hepatitis B prevention work among street youth in Montréal, points out that in the early stages of the North American epidemic, "many communities that felt directly affected [i.e. other than gay men] were very active as well." She feels that these communities may not have as high a profile as the queer community. "Gay activism has always managed to pull on white middle-class gay men in high places."

Indeed, insufficient access to financial and social resources has been and will likely continue to impede AIDS activism. Sexism has thus limited the recognition of sex workers, female caregivers for people living with HIV/AIDS (PWAs), and queer women in the AIDS movement. As one specific example, Crago notes "Lesbians and bisexual women have been major parts of

Action Now in Toronto. But AIDS activism has also included the work of somewhat less 'militant' groups. Recent work by organizations and individuals across Canada, for instance, played a role in inducing Jean Chrétien to announce a renewal of the National AIDS Strategy earlier this year. (Significantly, however, funding is only to continue at a constant dollar level. Inflation, coupled with the rise in infection rates in every demographic group in Canada, means that the quality and quantity of AIDS services and research will suffer.)

AIDS activism has also involved advances on a more personal level as well. According to David Thompson, Executive Director of AIDS Community Care Montréal, one example "for which AIDS activism is not necessarily exclusively responsible is that of patient empowerment in a medical setting." Whether it is through input into designing research cohorts, demanding access to medical records, or forcing professionals to hear the concerns of patients with AIDS when providing treatment, "AIDS has reinforced the notion of participation in the decision making process. [It has meant] not having the decisions made for you, but having them made in consultation with you."

Marginalization

Perhaps a key aspect of AIDS activism has been that it has emphasized the needs and rights of traditionally marginalized groups in society. In addition to the example of queer men, women both here and in many underdeveloped areas constitute another such group. Overall, women often lack financial and social resources to avoid sexually risky situations and to employ safer sex methods. Additionally, it is physiologically easier for a man to transmit HIV to a woman than for the reverse to occur. As a result of women's increased social vulnerability, many international health organizations have focused on the needs of women in developing AIDS control strategies.

Nguyen offers another example of AIDS activism bringing attention to marginalized groups, noting that in France, "there's a big emphasis on the problems of immigration and the fact that people with HIV that didn't have the 'proper papers' were being deported back to their home countries despite the fact that they were ill and wouldn't have access to care."

Building Communities

Through the hardships of these

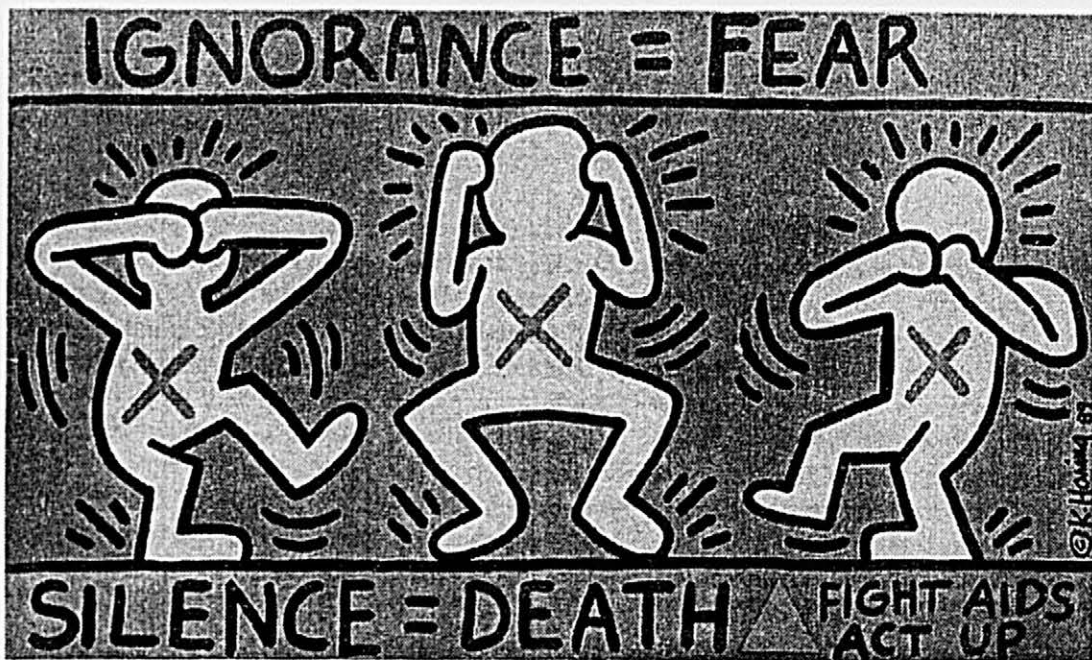
battles, some would argue that at least one significant gain has been the potential for strengthening communities. Among queer men in particular, confronting AIDS has often meant the reinforcement of existing institutions and the creation of new ones. AIDS has been widely visible in queer community centres and education campaigns for some time, such that the gay community is frequently cited as a model for changing behaviour to reduce risk.

Simon Watney, Director of the Red Hot Charitable Foundation in London, has gone so far as to say that the common experience of HIV/AIDS has created a diasporic consciousness among gay and bisexual men on a global scale. Nguyen concurs, describing how "AIDS has allowed gay men to come out and exist in quasi-public spaces all around the world."

But the development of such social bonds is not always realized. The reproducibility of this model depends largely on the extent to which people see themselves as a unified or cohesive group. Commonality does not always exist, for instance, among IV drug users, whose shooting up may play no role in their self-identity, nor among sex workers, whose work is often transitory or temporary. Crago thus prefers to speak of 'micro-communities,' in which the shared experience of grief has developed "an ethic of community care, help, self-awareness and self-love." She contends that too often, "we have a middle-class conception of what activism is. [Micro-communities] bring activism from the marching-in-the-street level down to the level of, 'I'm going to care for the person working on the block next to me.'"

Fear of the Other

In many ways, AIDS represents a nexus linking multiple layers of a wide variety of social problems together. In the words of Mikhaël Elbaz and Ruth Murbach, professors at Laval University and UQAM, "AIDS has brought back panic, fear and terror of the Other, condemned and damned, at a time when our Western societies, armed with the miracle of antibiotics, sanitary hygiene, self-surveillance and the presence of the providential state, seemed to have repressed the fear of death." The many forms of AIDS activism that have arisen in the recent past have in part developed in response to such changes. While the faces of AIDS activism may change, its ultimate goals - those which challenge the conservative norms of society and work to confront the epidemic - are here to stay.



fects person's body)".

Such images are not unfamiliar to most living in today's 'era of HIV/AIDS.' The history of AIDS and AIDS activism have been intrinsically linked to that of the queer community, and in particular, the struggle of gay and bisexual men. Over the past two decades, AIDS activists have worked to end AIDS-related discrimination, to render the epidemic more visible and to place efforts to combat it high on the public agenda.

From the earliest recorded North American cases in the late 1970s, HIV has disproportionately infected men who have had penetrative anal sex with other men. This is due to the relative ease with which the virus passes into tissues lining the anus that are damaged during intercourse. For many, the institutional-

ant Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at McGill, "the dehomosexualization of AIDS is actually quite old, and it's been during the past three to five years that other groups have become AIDS activists - whether that be minority women, immigrant groups, or so on."

Nguyen notes that this shift has sometimes been so significant that "gay activists are trying to 're-gay' the epidemic." He attributes this change to increasingly large demand for increasingly scarce resources. While heterosexual transmission to young women is the fastest growing method of viral spread in the developed world, the majority of AIDS cases are still to be found among gay and bisexual men.

Excessive emphasis on this trend can be problematic, however, for a

ACT-UP," though their contributions have likely been underrecognized.

As with most social movements, the result of this inequality is often that a limited number of voices dominate the picture. Public perception of the movement is not fully representative of the range of individuals truly involved. While queer men seem to have filled a principal role in the past, the diversification of the movement and of the populations affected by the syndrome in recent years have redefined both who and what AIDS activism is.

Who's an Activist?

Radical work like ACT-UP's original protest continues in multiple chapters around the globe, as well as in organizations such as AIDS

Sexual identity and gender identity glossary

The following is a glossary of some basic terms used in describing gender and sexual identity. These meanings, however, are continually changing and are used differently by different individuals in different contexts. The definitions assume the existence of only two sexes and genders which many people consider closely related or overlapping. In this way, they may present a limited view of a much richer reality.

Despite these caveats, many people find the terms listed here useful in varying degrees, even if only as a starting point for describing how their view of the world differs from that represented here.

Bear in mind that gender identity refers to whether one thinks of oneself as a man (masculine) or as a woman (feminine), gender/sex is whether one has a vagina or a penis and gender roles are society's sex.

Sexual identity refers to whom one is sexually and romantically attracted. When one's sex and gender identity are different, sexual identity can be based on either one. Alternatively, one may have two sexual identities, one as a man and one as a woman.

Androgyny: The quality of simultaneously exhibiting 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics.

Benjamin Standards, The: The international guidelines developed by Dr. Harry Benjamin regarding requirements of applicants for *hormone therapy* and *sexual reassignment surgery*.

Bigendered: One who switches between masculine and feminine *gender roles* periodically.

Biphobia: The oppression or mistreatment of bisexuals, especially by *lesbians* and *gay men*.

Bisexual: One who has significant sexual attractions to members of both the same and the other sex, or who identify as members of the *bisexual community*.

Butch: 1. 'Masculine' or macho dress and behaviour, regardless of *sex* or *gender identity*. 2. A sub-identity of *lesbian* or *gay*, based on 'masculine' or macho dress and behavior.

Come out: 1. To disclose one's own *sexual identity* to another. 2. To discover that one's own *sexual identity* is different than previously assumed. 3. To deal with one's own and others reactions to the discovery of revelation of one's *sexual*

identity.

Drag: 1. Clothes, often unusual or dramatic, especially those considered appropriate to the other sex. 2. Can be applied to any recognizable 'look' (e.g., "I see you are in corporate *drag* today.")

Dyke: Reclaimed derogatory slang. Refers to *lesbians* and *bi-sexual women*.

F2M: Female to male. Used to specify the direction of a *sex* or *gender role change*.

Femme: 1. 'Feminine' or effeminate dress and behavior regardless of *sex* or *gender identity*. 2. A sub-identity of *lesbian* or *gay*, based on 'feminine' or 'girlish' dress and behaviour.

Gay: One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions primarily to members of the same sex, or who identifies as a member of the *gay community*. Can refer to *gay males* or both *gay males* and *lesbians*. Although some use the term *gay community* to refer to all sexual minorities, *lesbians* and *bisexuals* often do not feel included by it.

Gender (identity): A psychological *gender role* (i.e. 'masculine' or 'feminine').

Gender (identity) community: People who identify as *transvestite*, *transsexual*, or *transgendered*. Members of the *gender community* do not necessarily identify as members of the *sexual minority community*.

Gender dysphoria (GD): Unhappiness or discomfort experienced by one whose sexual organs do not match one's *gender identity*.

Gender neutral: Clothing, behaviours, thoughts, feelings, relationships, etc. which are considered appropriate for members of both sexes.

Gender role: Arbitrary rules assigned by society, that define what clothing, behaviours, thoughts, feelings, relationships, etc. are considered appropriate and inappropriate for members of each sex. What is considered 'masculine,' 'feminine,' or 'neutral' varies according to location, class, occasion, and numerous other factors.

Genetic male/man (GM): One who was considered male from birth, regardless of one's present *sex* or *gender identity*.

Genetic female/woman (GF/FM): One who was considered female from birth, regardless of one's present *sex* or *gender identity*.

Hermaphrodite: One who has both a penis and a vagina. Considered derogatory.

Heterosexual (het): One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions primarily to members of the other sex.

Heterosexism: The assumption that identifying as *heterosexual* and having sexual and romantic attractions only to members of the other sex is good and acceptable, and that other sexual identities and attractions are bad and unacceptable. The assumption that anyone whose *sexual orientation* is not known must be *straight*.

Homophobia: Originally, a fear of sexual attraction to the same sex. Developed into a term describing all aspects of the oppression of *lesbians*, *gays*, and *bisexuals* (sometimes does not include *bisexuals*).

Homosexual: Formal or clinical term for *gay*, usually meaning *gay male*, but can refer to *lesbian* or *bisexual*. *Homosexual* and *homosexuality* are terms often associated with the proposition that same gender attractions are a mental disorder (homophilia). The terms are distasteful to some people.

Hormone therapy: Used to change secondary sex characteristics, including breast size, weight distribution, and facial hair growth.

Identify/ied (as): To think of oneself as having a particular *sexual identity* or *gender identity* (e.g. "I identify as a *bisexual*" or "He is *bisexual-identified*"). To emphasize that an identity term refers to one's internal reality, as opposed to what others perceive.

Identity: How one thinks of oneself. One's internal self, as opposed to what others perceive.

Kinsey scale, The: An equal-interval scale with continuous graduations between *heterosexuality* (0) and *homosexuality* (6) used as a measure of *sexuality*.

Label: How someone else sees or thinks of one.

Lesbian: A woman who has significant sexual and romantic attractions to members of the same sex, or who identifies as a member of

the *lesbian community*. *Bisexual* women often do not feel included by this term.

M2F: Male to female. Used to specify the direction of a *sex* or *gender role change*.

Monosexual: One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions primarily to members of one sex (i.e. *straight*, *gay*, *lesbian*). Someone who is not *bisexual*.

Neuter: 1. One who has neither a penis nor a vagina. 2. Occasionally used to mean *androgynous*.

Other sex/gender: The other *sex* or *gender* than the reference person's own (e.g. "She has an other *sex partner*").

(To be) Out: To be open about one's *sexual identity* with someone or in a situation.

(To) Out (someone): 1. To disclose a second person's *sexual identity* to a third person, particularly without the second person's permission. 2. To disclose one's own *sexual identity*, sometimes inadvertently.

Pre-operative transsexual (Pre-op TS): One who is actively planning to switch physical sexes, mostly to relieve *gender dysphoria*. Probably, but not necessarily, cross dresses, takes *hormone therapy*, and gets electrolysis.

Primary sex organs: Penis (male) or vagina (female).

Queer: Reclaimed derogatory slang for the *sexual minority community* (e.g. *Queer Nation*). Not accepted by all the *sexual minority community*, especially older members.

Same sex/gender: The same *sex* or *gender* as the reference person's own (e.g. "She has a *same sex partner*").

Sex: Male or female, depending on one's *primary sex organs*.

Sex role: See *gender role*.

Sexual identity: How one thinks of oneself, in terms of being significantly attracted to members of the same or the other sex. Based on one's internal experience, as opposed to which *gender* one's sexual partners belong to.

Sexual identity/minority community: A formal term which includes *lesbians*, *bisexuals*, *gays*,

and sometimes members of the *gender community*. Members of the *sexual minority community* usually do not identify as members of the *gender community*.

Sexual orientation/preference: How one thinks of her/himself, in terms of being significantly attracted to members of the same of the other *sex*. *Sexual orientation* implies the inability to control or influence the development of one's sexual and romantic attractions. Conversely, *sexual preference* implies the ability to control or influence the development of one's sexual and romantic attractions.

Sexual reassignment surgery (SRS): A surgical procedure which changes one's primary sexual organs from one sex to another (i.e. penis to vagina or vagina to penis).

Stonewall: A pivotal event in 1969, which basically involved *queers* revolting against discrimination, that many attribute to having spurred the modern *queer* movement.

Straight: Colloquial for *heterosexual*. Because *straight* has connotations of "unadulterated," "pure," and "honest," some members of the *sexual identity community* object to the implication that one who is not *straight* is "bent," "adulterated," "impure," or "dishonest." *Straight* has connotations of 'narrow,' 'straight-laced,' or 'conservative,' and some *heterosexual-identified* people find it distasteful.

Transgender community: Formal term for *gender community*.

Transgendered (TG): One who switches *gender roles*, whether just once, or many times at will. Inclusive term for *transsexuals* and *transvestites*.

Transsexual (TS): One who switches physical sexes (usually just once, but there are exceptions). *Primary sex change* is accomplished by *sexual reassignment surgery*, *hormone therapy*, electrolysis, additional surgery, and other treatments that change secondary sex characteristics.

Transvestite (TV): One who mainly cross-dresses for pleasure in the appearance and sensation. The pleasure may not be directly erotic. May feel comfortable in a focused transgender role while cross dressed. May occasionally experience *gender dysphoria*.

poems

by Marnie Levitt

marriage

I have fantasies
of marriage
you,
kneeling
asking me to
I,
tripping on the sentence
like the wedding dress
I've always wanted
to wear
basking in a bouquet

of your words
promising safety
and comfort
and love
imagining this ring
to be more than
a token between lovers,
something as recognizable
as your scent,
as the shape of your chest,
the curve of your lips.

I line up against these
body parts
fantasizing that they curve
into intelligible words
couple
novios
spouses
not only for the future of my
world
but for what surrounds it.
I fantasize

we go out together
walking at night
and I'm thinking in my head
I know I can't explain this to
you
anymore
I know the words I use will not
make sense
to you
but, femme
I know they don't work in this
context
so instead,
I blow the fog from my mouth
letting the frosty air form
shapes that
look like the sounds of words.
wordlessly we walk
hand in hand
Me wearing lipstick and
eyelashes and
slick black pants
You wearing jeans and a shirt
and a smile
holding hands
I realize that your arm fits
better around my shoulders,
that my body curves into your
chest better as I lean on you
that you go wild with compli-

ments like, 'you're charming'
and wild with the shape and
colour of my lips
But my lips do not shape any
particular word,
any particular word
to slip off my tongue and onto
yours
into your mouth
I don't breathe ideas,
I just fall in step beside you-
dressed for the world
I, in my makeup and tight-
fitting clothes,
you in your loose smile, strong
grip and easy stride
we are both dressed to fight
we are both dressed in our
own version of woman,
of dyke
and when we get home from
fighting the cold,
the stares
when we get home from
walking
we strip off our clothes,
they hit the floor with the clank
of armor,
and we are two women,
and no particular word.

about the roof

making love on the roof
under the moon
you,
moving slowly inside me
me,
relaxing into the sky with
every stroke
looking into your eyes
your face as clear

as the moon
swelling
like breasts
breathing calmness into me
like a cold wind
your face expressionless
saving feeling
for your hands
making love

like a conversation
aching to be far enough away
to touch me
bending an arch over my heart
contracting
here on the roof
light takes years to reach me
but your eyes are stars
and your hands are gold

Dial 'Q' for Queer

LBGTM's Queer Line offers an open ear

by Le'Nise Brothers

According to the Hite report on sexual preferences one in every ten persons in society is gay. Using these statistics, among the 40,000 students at McGill, 4,000 are queer or are exploring their sexuality.

wondering about their sexuality, LBGTM has established a support line to help those in need.

Established a month ago, Queer Line is a new service aimed at queer and queer positive people within McGill and Montréal.

The service fields calls from those looking for support and those who have serious questions about their sexual orientation and general inquiries.

Despite society's cries of open-mindedness, it is hard for a person questioning their sexuality to find support. Emily Harris-McLeod, the founder and co-ordinator of the service, says that Queer Line will be effective in many ways because it is "appropriate for someone who is just coming out, as it is non-intimidating and anonymous."

She explains that it is comforting to know that a service such as Queer Line is in

place because it benefits everyone, not just members of the queer community.

Staffed with 25 Queer and Queer positive volunteers, the line operates every Monday to Friday from 8 to 11 pm with volunteers working on shifts. At all times, Queer Line strives to have both a male and a female volunteer available.

"It is comforting to know that there is someone there who is willing to talk to you, about anything and everything," explains Harris-McLeod.

Although one might say that these services overlap with McGill Nightline and other student services, Harris-McLeod maintains, "most of the volunteers are queer or very queer positive, so they can relate or at least empathize with whatever it is that you're going through. The line is protected by its strict protocol, in that all volunteers must have at least 20 hours of base training.

The training involves seminars and different speakers giving volunteers a broader perspective and alternative strategies to deal with problems.

Many have seen the stickers around campus and in residence announcing Queer Line. Some of

these stickers have attracted homophobic comments as a cowardly form of protest.

Harris-McLeod acknowledges that such comments have been made, but says that on the whole, the reaction toward the new service have been very positive. She explains, "many people have just come up to me and thanked me for starting Queer Line. They say that is comforting to know that people who are coming out have someone to turn to."

Since the line's inception, there have been a number of calls dealing with a broad range of issues. These include questions about coming out, aspects of queer life and just general inquiries. Harris-McLeod emphasizes that this line is not just for the queer community. It is open to those who have questions about how to deal with a friend who has just come out and also for those who have general questions about queer culture.

LBGTM president Darrell Tan feels that the Queer line will be very effective. He says that "although they were prepared to have no calls in the first month, there have been quite a few, from a wide range of issues and topics. He emphasizes that Queer Line is

for "anyone, regardless of orientation, and that with the training the volunteers receive, they are capable of handling most problems."

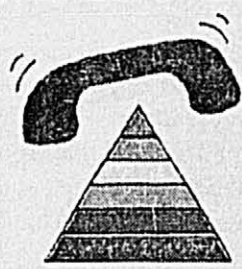
The information pamphlet states Queer Line is an "anonymous, confidential, non-directional, non-judgmental listening and referral service" This idea is central to the Queer Line and its volunteers.

The position of the caller will never be compromised and all information will be held in the strictest confidence. "Confidentiality and anonymity are extremely important to us," says Harris-McLeod. The volunteers will not pretend to understand everything about the caller, but will do as best as they can to help them.

This approachability is what Harris-McLeod hopes will make Queer Line successful. She feels that Queer Line and other LBGTM services will help break down any remaining barriers and assist members of McGill's queer community - along with providing a unifying voice for the queer community.

You can call the Queer Line at 398-6822 Monday to Friday from 20b00pm to 23b00pm

LBGTM QUEER LINE



398 - 6822

Mon - Fri 8pm to 11pm

CONFIDENTIAL
QUEER PEER SUPPORT
AND REFERRAL LINE

For those who need someone to talk to, or those who are just

10 Myths About Bisexuality

1. MYTH: A bisexual is someone who is sleeping with both a man and a woman — right now.

FACT: Bisexual people have the potential to feel sexually attracted to, and fall in love with, members of either sex. This does not mean that bisexual people need to have two lovers in order to feel fulfilled. Bisexual people lead a variety of sexual lifestyles; from dating both men and women at the same time, to being monogamous. Bisexuality is an orientation that allows people to be open to a variety of sexual experiences, whether acted upon or not.

2. MYTH: Bisexuals are promiscuous.

FACT: As a group, bisexuals are no more promiscuous than any other group of people. They are just as likely as someone who is heterosexual or homosexual to be polyamorous and are as capable as anybody else of making a long-term commitment to a lover.

3. MYTH: All bisexuals look for the same thing in men and women.

FACT: Many bisexuals are attracted to different things in men and women. "I like women because they are women and I like men because they are men. I used to think that the feelings were the same but they're not; not to me at least. The chemistry, the different. They're both wonderful, and they're both part of me." However, some bisexuals look for the same character traits in

both men and women.

4. MYTH: When bisexuals look for a partner, they don't care if their lover is male or female.

FACT: Most bisexuals tend to favour one gender over another at different times in their lives. They recognize, however, that they are attracted to both men and women, and can fall in love with an individual of either gender at any given time.

5. MYTH: Bisexuals are sexually confused, they don't know what they want. They are "troubled" sexually.

FACT: Bisexuality is as valid a sexual identity as any other. Bisexuals are not sexually confused. They know exactly who they are. When they are looking for a partner, they might be looking for a man or a woman, depending on what their needs at the moment are.

6. MYTH: When bisexuals marry/date someone from the opposite sex, they are no longer bisexual.

FACT: Bisexuals do not give up their identity when they fall in love with someone. Many people identify as bisexual for their entire lives, regardless of the gender of their partner. However, a person's sexuality can change with time. He or she may be more attracted other times. Someone who is bisexual (i.e. attracted to both genders) may not remain so his or her entire life. A bisexual may, at some

point, shift his or her sexual identity to a monosexual one. That does not mean that they were never really bisexual in the first place, only that they have changed.

7. MYTH: When bisexuals are not in a same sex relationship, they are enjoying "heterosexual privilege."

FACT: One can argue that it is easier to date a member of the opposite sex since society accepts, and even praises you. However, when dating a member of the opposite sex, bisexuals have to fight for their identity to be recognized by the straight community (which will assume heterosexuality.) On top of that, they have to fight biphobia in the lesbian and gay communities.

8. MYTH: Bisexuals are really straight people trying to be trendy (because, everyone knows being queer is "in")

FACT: Being bisexual isn't easy. The heterosexual community discriminates against bisexuals for being queer, while the homosexual community stigmatizes bisexuals for their "heterosexual side." Bisexuals are just as likely as homosexuals to be harassed by homophobic people as they leave a gay bar, or walk hand-in-hand with a same-sex partner. On the other hand, there is an incredible amount of biphobia in the gay and lesbian communities, which sometimes regard bisexuals as homosexuals on their way to "fully" ing a label of bisexuality to preserve "heterosexual privilege." Bisexuals therefore have to fight to gain acceptance in both the gay and

straight communities.

9. MYTH: Bisexuals are really gays/lesbians, they're just coming out of the closet in stages.

FACT: Some gays or lesbians will come out of the closet as bisexual before realizing that they are homosexual. This does not mean that all people who identify as bisexual will eventually declare that they are monosexual. Bisexuality, as a sexual identity, exists and stands on its own.

10. MYTH: Everyone is inherently bisexual.

You will not automatically "become" bisexual as the result of a brief attraction, acted upon or not, to a member of the same/opposite sex. Even though statistically, a vast majority of people have felt some brief attraction to members of both sexes, it does not mean that everyone is bisexual. Bisexuality, as the term is used here, is an identity. It is an acceptance of a potential to have sexual and romantic relations with members of either gender. Brief attractions do not change someone's conceptions of what a partner is to them. Differences do exist between people in terms of sexual orientations, and attractions. These differences should be recognized.

**With excerpts from the Student Health services pamphlet on Bisexuality and Free Kaufman, Published by HarperPerennial, 1996. For more information on Bisexuality, or on any other queer topic, call LBGTm.*

McGill overlooks queer reality

Queer groups find unsatisfactory welcome at McGill

by Alex Halperin

McGill University's stance as an institution that does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, seems to be a policy based on ignoring the many sexual orientations represented in the community. Some queer members of the community feel satisfied with McGill's detached policy. One member of the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgendered, McGill (LBGTm) said McGill is generally sympathetic to queer issues and "In general [students] can't get away with homophobia." Others believe that McGill's ambivalent policies are unsatisfactory; that in a heterosexual society there must be constant education and activism to eliminate homophobia.

One such opinion belongs to Darrell Tan, president of LBGTm. He feels that while campus has "progressive elements," a heterosexist attitude dominates the academic and social life at McGill. He feels homophobia can come out of sexist and heterosexist activities at past Faculty of Management Winter Carnival and FROSH (which Karen Hurley claims the MUS is attempting to correct in the September 23 issue of The Bottom Line). Hence, such bla-

tant homophobia was met by student outrage.

Perhaps more threatening to a queer friendly environment are social events which fail to address issues of sexual orientation in any way. However, failure to address the issue is rarely protested and propagates the impression of an exclusively heterosexual community. Darrell's proposed solution for heterosexism in FROSH programs is very strong tolerance training for leaders in order that new students can enjoy the drunken revelry in a prejudice free environment.

Like many other student organizations, LBGTm receives funding from SSMU. LBGTm uses its money for several discussion groups, political activism, social events and a newly established queer line where McGill students counsel other students and residents of Montréal on personal issues of sexual orientation.

While Darrell is relatively satisfied with LBGTm's funding he finds it unfortunate that his organization which uses funding almost exclusively for community service must still fund raise as extensively as it

currently does. Duncan Reid, SSMU's Vice-President of Finances and operations, responded that the majority of programs that receive SSMU funding are service oriented. Reid claimed that SSMU essentially met all of LBGTm's financial requests which totaled almost three thousand dollars.

One service provided by LBGTm is the publication of a pamphlet "McGill QUEER Course Calendar 1997-1998." It contains an unofficial list of twenty-one courses, each of which contains queer related subject matter. Several members of the queer community are distressed by the disproportional small number of course offerings but acknowledge the difficulty of adding courses amidst current budget cuts. Darrell suggests that students interested in issues of sexual orientation do their independent research on related subject matter. For example, the LBGTm office contains an extensive library of queer related fiction and non-fiction publications.

Karen Cope, professor of Feminist Theory and Contemporary Women's Fiction, two courses in the queer course packet, finds the academic atmosphere

here less sympathetic than at Johns Hopkins and Brown Universities. These two prestigious U.S. schools where Professor Cope had positions since earning her doctorate had insulated queer communities, whereas McGill has only a "handful" of out professors.

One of the most apparent shortcomings of McGill's queer oriented courses is its lack of a course devoted entirely to queer theory. Cope attributes this to budget cuts as well as the acknowledgment that queer theory is largely US based. While at Brown, Queer Theory was the academic "Flavor of the Month"; some of its relevance is lost across the US/Canadian border.

This has not stopped her from instilling a great deal of it in her courses. She attempts to instill what she sees as one of the major issues of the twentieth century, a "thinking concept of sexuality in modernity." Cope progressed in pioneering her courses largely independent of her department and the school administration. It has been suggested to her that she not keep the queer theory element of her courses. Her response has been to "teach it quietly".

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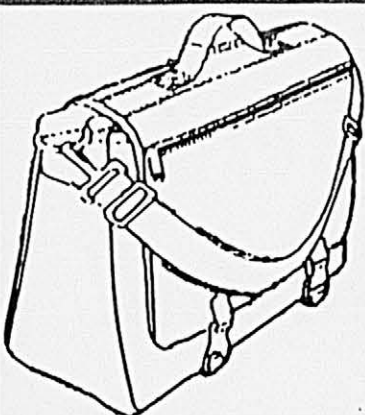
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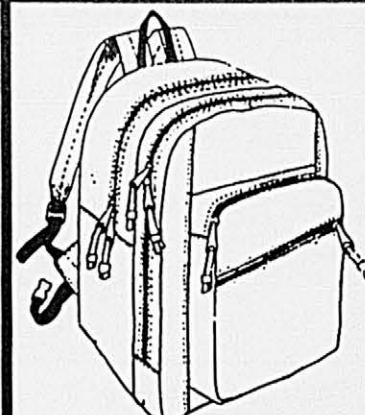
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